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SUBJECT: EU NOVEMBER GAERC - SELECTIONS FOR EU POSITIONS  
AND POLICY ON AFGHANISTAN TOP "JUMBO" AGENDA

REF: A. USEU BRUSSELS 1560  
[1](#)B. USEU BRUSSELS 01555

Classified By: USEU POL Acting M-C Mary T. Curtin for  
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: EU Foreign Ministers met November 16-17 in Brussels for their biannual "jumbo" or "super" General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) that included a November 16 informal meeting with EU Defense Ministers and a November 17 meeting with EU Development Ministers. Highlights of the General Affairs session include the Council's decision to refer Albania's EU membership application to the European Commission for its opinion, preparations for the upcoming December 11 European Council, and development issues. Discussions in the External Affairs Council centered around Afghanistan, Russia/Ukraine, and ESDP issues, including extending the executive mandate of the EU's military mission to Bosnia. There were in depth discussions on Afghanistan both days, with a focus on expanding the EU's civilian role and on creating a senior civilian representative position improve coordination of civilian and military efforts. The next regular meeting of the EU FMs is scheduled to take place after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, which should lead to separate meetings of the "General Affairs" and "Foreign Affairs" Council formations on December 7-8. End Summary.

General Affairs  
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[1](#)2. (U) Chaired by Swedish Minister for EU Affairs Malmstrom, the General Affairs session of the GAERC focused on a range of internal issues. The Council agreed to transfer the Albanian application for EU membership to the Commission for its opinion, the next step in Albania's quest for EU membership. Malmstrom noted that the Swedish Presidency was "very happy that the Council was able to take this step." The formal statement noted the EU consensus "that the future of the Western Balkans lies in the European Union," but emphasized that progress was up to each applicant state.

[1](#)3. (U) The Council also discussed the agenda for the November 19 meeting of EU leaders to select new incumbents for the top EU positions under the Lisbon Treaty. (Ref A) Previewing the event, Malmstrom made it clear that the Presidency's aim would be "to reach agreement on the three names for the top-level jobs," i.e., the permanent President of the European Council, the new High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Secretary-General of the EU Council. She reported that the decision would take the form of a political agreement to

be formalized through a written procedure when the Lisbon Treaty comes into force (Note: the legal basis for the appointments to the new top-level jobs will only exist when "Lisbon" has taken effect).

¶4. (U) As for preparations for the December 10-11 meeting of the European Council, Malmstrom said the Council took note of the annotated draft agenda circulated by the Swedish Presidency and did not elaborate. According to the draft, the Presidency expects the European Council to essentially address institutional issues (Lisbon implementation and new Commission); the EU economic, financial and employment situation; JHA matters (adoption of the Stockholm program); climate change (Copenhagen conference); and foreign policy issues to be determined subject to developments. The Council also held a policy debate on the EU "Lisbon strategy" for growth and jobs post-2010. Malmstrom said the renewed strategy for the period post-2010 (decisions are to be taken by the European Council in the spring 2010) would be the "first test of a mature political Union" equipped "with a new treaty."

¶5. (U) Ministers also discussed the EU sustainable development strategy. Malmstrom said the ministers exchanged views on how to pursue the strategy based on a long-term vision of sustainability in which economic growth, social cohesion and environmental protection go hand in hand and are mutually supporting. Commission Vice President Wallstrom also referred to the Commission paper released earlier on the subject.

¶6. (U) At the post-meeting press conference, journalists

asked Malmstrom and Wallstrom primarily about who might be selected for the new EU leadership positions. Malmstrom said that names were "not discussed" by ministers in the November 16 GAERC as this was the responsibility of EU heads of state and government. Wallstrom used the occasion to reiterate her call for the leaders to ensure a gender balance, referring to the piece she co-signed in the Financial Times with Commissioner Nellie Kroes and EP Vice President Dana Wallis. Asked about the formation of the new Commission (for which EU governments had only nominated three women as of November 17), Wallstrom gave credit to Barroso, saying the Commission President was "fully aware" of the problem.

#### External Relations

¶7. (U) Chaired by FM Bildt, discussions of the External Relations Council focused on Afghanistan, Russia/Ukraine, Belarus, and ESDP issues. The Council held an informal exchange of views on Afghanistan in a November 16 joint meeting with EU Defense Ministers and at the November 16 dinner with NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen. Afghanistan also dominated the discussion at a separate, joint session November 17 between EU Foreign and Development ministers devoted to the general topic of democracy promotion in EU external relations. The Ministers discussed Afghanistan extensively with guest UN Special Representative to Afghanistan Kai Eide, with a focus on expanding the civilian role in Afghanistan, particularly in regards to creating a senior civilian representative role that could help better coordinate civilian and military efforts. Eide encouraged the ministers to carefully structure its aid assistance, rather than using PRTs as a primarily mode of assistance. He emphasized the importance of engaging with the Afghans on new aid projects, to ensure the projects best meet Afghan priorities.

¶8. (U) Regarding Russia/Ukraine, the Council took note of final preparations for the EU-Russia and EU-Ukraine Summits to be held respectively in Stockholm on November 18 and Kiev on December 4. Commissioner for External Relations Ferrero-Waldner said the "very interesting speech" by President Medvedev underlining the need to "implement major reforms in the Russian economy" showed how the EU could be a "major partner" of Russia. Ferrero-Waldner cited as an important deliverable for the November 18 Summit in Stockholm the Early Warning Mechanism signed on November 16 by Energy

Commissioner Piebalgs and the Russian Energy Minister, which contains practical arrangements to prevent or react to an emergency situation threatening energy supplies to the EU.

¶9. (U) The Council reviewed the situation in Belarus and adopted a formal conclusion to extend until October 2010 the EU sanctions (restrictive measures). However, in order to encourage progress in the areas identified by the EU, the Council decided at the same time to extend the suspension of the application of the travel restrictions imposed on certain Belarusia officials. Referring to the conclusions' "fir and clear" language, Swedish FM Bildt note that the conclusions on Belarus were adopted without discussion, except for a report by a few ministers who had recently been to Minsk. Speaking for the ministers, Bildt noted "We are disappointed with the pace of progress (in Belarus) but we are not giving up hope."

¶10. (C) Ministers also held debated, without conclusions, the situation in the Middle East, focusing on the situation on the ground. The reportedly debated how to support Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, expressed concern over the lack of change in the situation since the October GAERC, and discussed the continued expansion of Israeli settlements and the demolition of houses in East Jerusalem. According to one diplomat there was discussion over the rise of tensions in Jerusalem, and a debate whether language in support of the creation of a Palestinian state should include reference to Jerusalem as the future capital of such a state.

¶11. (U) On Iran, Ministers adopted a Council Decision and Regulation updating the list of persons and entities in Iran to which targeted EU sanctions apply. (Ref B)

¶12. (C) The Council conducted its six-monthly review of developments and projects in the field of European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), in the presence of defense

ministers. In particular, it:

-- Underlined the contribution of EUNAVFOR-ATALANTA to maritime security off the coast of Somalia by protecting World Food Program chartered vessels delivering aid, vessels supplying critical shipments to the AU peace support operation in Somalia (Amisom), and other vulnerable vessels, notably in the Gulf of Aden and in the Somali Basin.

-- Agreed to extend Operation ATALANTA for another year following the end of the current mandate on December 12.

-- Approved a crisis management concept on a possible ESDP mission to contribute to the training of security forces of Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG). According to French MFA contacts, we understand that a number of countries have indicated a willingness to contribute forces and that Spain has volunteered to lead the mission. Training is expected to take place in Uganda.

-- Welcomed further progress in preparatory planning work for the possible future development of Operation ALTHEA in Bosnia toward a non-executive capacity-building and training operation. It reiterated that a decision on the matter would necessarily take account of political developments, including the future role of the EU Special Representative.

-- Highlighted the revision of the Joint Action for the EU Satellite Center, the document that serves as the legal and financial basis for the Center's operations. The revised Joint Action allows the Satellite Center to share information with all NATO Allies. In this context, the GAERC also noted the progress made in cooperation between the Satellite Center and the U.S. National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency.

¶13. (U) In the semi-annual meeting with development ministers, the Council adopted an operational framework on aid effectiveness containing key measures to reduce the burden on developing countries and to contribute to a more effective delivery of aid. The Council also adopted

conclusions on democracy promotion, noting that the EU has an extensive array of instruments at its disposal in support of democracy worldwide, which the Council concluded could be applied more consistently and effectively across various EU efforts.

¶14. (U) In response to a question about Macedonia (not discussed at this GAERC), Bildt characterized the name dispute as a "bilateral issue" between Greece and Macedonia, while reiterating support for the efforts of the mediator. He said that he detected a willingness "on both sides to move forward," adding: "We can only appeal to both Athens and Skopje to make use of the will that is there."

MURRAY